

CAMPING IN OLD VIRGINIA

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Maryland

A CAMPING party was one of our dreams while in training. Many an evening after we came off duty, too tired to do anything else, we would lounge around and plan an ideal camp. After we graduated, we were all so scattered our plans never materialized until last summer.

Accidentally I heard of a house-boat for rent near the picturesque little town of Occoquan, situated on Occoquan Creek, near where it empties into the Potomac River and only an hour's ride from Washington. This being a central point there seemed a possibility that our dream might be realized. I immediately wrote to all my classmates and received such enthusiastic replies from them that I engaged the boat, bought a tent, and wrote them to meet me on July 3d, each to bring a friend—a brother preferred.

We were to be in uniform, so I asked each nurse to bring two old blue uniforms, also red bandana handkerchiefs for neck and belt, a farmer's hat decorated with a red bandana, a tin cup, plate and spoon, a blanket and a tick to fill with straw.

The men were to wear blue shirts to match our uniforms with bandana handkerchiefs for the neck and khaki trousers and leggings.

My brother and I drove across country about twenty miles carrying a small stove, hammocks and a few other necessities. When we reached the top of the last hill we were repaid for our long drive by a beautiful view of Occoquan Bay as it widens out into the Potomac River.

The town of Occoquan has a most romantic location at the foot of the hill and bursts suddenly upon you when you have no idea there is civilization anywhere near you. The name is of Indian origin, meaning under a hill. There is a tradition that Spaniards landed here and made a settlement early in the seventeenth century. The town lies at the head of navigation at the foot of what is known as Occoquan Falls, where the small river comes dashing and foaming among great rocks, making a descent of about seventy feet in the last half mile. It is a place that artists rave over and photographers delight to frequent. On your way to Jamestown, via the Atlantic Coast Line, you can catch a glimpse of Occoquan, as you whirl along over a high bridge, two miles farther down the stream. Nestling among the foothills on the banks of a placid winding stream it is a sight which will not be forgotten.



HOUSE-BOAT WHICH SHELTERED US FOR TWO WEEKS.



LUNCH HOUR.

Just as we reached the outskirts of the town where we wished most to make a good impression, one wheel played us false and we made our debut in rather a precipitous and original manner.

On the stream just above the town is an old grist mill and above that an older mill in ruins overgrown with ivy. One hundred yards farther up stream amid huge rocks we anchored our house-boat which was to answer as sleeping apartments and a place in which to lock up our few valuables. Up a rugged but beautifully shaded path, along the "race" which furnished water for the mills, we found an ideal place to pitch our tent. Here we hung our hammocks, sheltered our stove, built our table, and camp was ready.

We were practically in a wilderness, yet within five minutes of the town of Occoquan, where we could procure everything we needed from fresh meat and home-made bread and pies to row-boats, launches and fishing tackle. One merchant even allowed the campers to get vegetables from his garden but would not charge anything for them because, as he said, "they grew."

Can anything more ideal be imagined? Not to the mind of any member of our camping party.

There were ten of us and we spent two weeks out of the ruts of life and in that happy state of mind which no one can appreciate unless she has been camping.

The days were spent chiefly in fishing and rowing and in luxurious idleness.

Every afternoon while the boys went to the deep hole for a swim, the girls would go "rocking." This is a word which was coined at Occoquan. It consisted in donning bathing suits and rowing up among the boulders where an hour was spent in climbing over the rocks, wading in the water and sand, and hanging to the sides of the boat as it drifted over deeper water.

And the boys up at the "deep hole" would plunge into its cool fathomless depth and then rise to the surface aglow with the joy of living; then they would lie on the rocks in the warm sunlight and let time drift by like the clouds.

But the climax came in the evening. As the shades gathered, you could see two boats push out from the shore and drift down the stream side by side, and following in their track over the water came floating songs and laughter until they died away as the boats drifted over "Devil's Reach." If you had asked the party where they were going they would have said "To meet the moon."

Each night they drifted down until they met Luna as she rose over the hills and then they rowed back to camp.

Excursions were taken in a launch to historic places. Only eight miles to the east stands quiet Mount Vernon. Down the Occoquan, as you pass under the high railroad bridge, you come to the site of the vanished village of Colchester, an important town in Washington's day, where but a single house now stands. Across the Potomac we found Marshall Hall. A few miles to the south is Old Dumfries, which was a port of entry before Baltimore or Alexandria. And, I almost forgot to say, that the ruins of the foundry, where John Ballendine cast iron cannon balls for our revolutionary forefathers, lay on the side of the "race" only one good stone's throw away.

But the most remarkable thing was our expenses.

The rent of the house-boat, the cost of the tent, the hire of the launch and row-boats, the provisions and everything amounted to about sixty-five cents a day for each person, and no effort was made to cut expenses either. And for this small sum, here amid a beautiful setting of hills, rocks and trees, we found heart's-ease for a fortnight.



AN UNCONSCIOUS PUN

THE following must be read aloud to be appreciated:

I was visiting at a physician's whose wife was an old friend of mine, and a bright woman greatly interested in hygienic subjects.

The doctor and I were talking about a case of cirrhosis of the liver. The wife listened in a puzzled way till the term had been used several times. Then she exclaimed with emphasis: "I never heard *sorosis* of the *liver*!"

"Did you ever hear of cirrhosis of anything?" asked her husband in an amused tone.

"Why, yes; it is a kind of a shoe!" was the prompt reply.

The doctor's and my eyes met, and in spite of ourselves we laughed at the unconscious pun. She took our mirth with good nature, but I doubt if she ever exactly understood the joke.

E. B. B.



"ROCKING."



OUT FOR A ROW.



AT THE FOOT OF THE RAPIDS.



ON THE WAY TO MOUNT VERNON.